

Basic Ed Funding Proposal

21st Legislative District Town Hall



March, 21 2009

The Legislature is poised to pass the most sweeping overhaul to our basic education funding system in more than thirty years.

The effort to redefine “basic education” (an incredibly important definition that establishes the legal basis for what the state is required to fund) and rewrite the funding system started with the efforts of a Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance. The task force submitted its recommendations to the Legislature in December 2008.

The bi-partisan group of legislators who served on that task force used those recommendations to introduce House Bill 1410. That bill was intended to be the vehicle of discussion among legislators, stakeholders and the general public. It became clear that there was much work to do before everyone could come to agreement.

So legislators decided to start anew. They introduced House Bill 2261 and began a new round of discussions with teachers, parents, administrators and others committed to our students and our state education system.

Guiding Principles

- *Begin with the End in Mind.* Each child in the state should receive an education that prepares them to succeed in the 21st century. All students should make at least one academic year of progress each school year. Disadvantaged students need significantly more support to help them catch up.
- *Teacher Quality Matters Most.* We must create a comprehensive and coordinated system of teacher evaluation, mentoring, certification, and compensation – all focused on improving student learning.
- *Structure Must Be Coherent and Transparent.* Funding must be based on factors that make sense and make a difference. The funding structure is as important as the funding itself.
- *Provide Flexibility with Accountability.* Districts should be allowed to make spending decisions to best meet the needs of their students, and explain to their citizens why their decisions may differ from the state’s assumptions. At the same time, we must improve our financial and student data systems.
- *Rely on the Best Available Information.* The funding model must draw from multiple sources, including research, best practices, and other available information to create a rational basis that a reasonable person could agree would provide the opportunity for a Basic Education.

Key Facts:

- Our goal is simple: improve Education to boost student achievement.
- The single most important thing we can do to expand and protect education funding is to redefine “basic education,” which this proposal does. The new definition ensures funding is protected for things like smaller class sizes and programs that support disadvantaged children.
- Let’s be clear – this proposal is about our K-12 funding structure, not the funding itself. The best way to expand and protect K-12 funding is to redefine “basic education.”

Some major pieces of the proposal are yet to be finalized, but here is an overview of where it stands now:

A New Definition of Basic Education

The current bill proposes to redefine basic education as an expanded instructional program that provides opportunity for students to graduate career and college ready. What does this mean? The Legislature will be required to fund an expanded instructional program that ensures when our students graduate from high school, they have completed the coursework needed to go directly on to college if they choose.

Steering Committee

A steering committee will oversee implementation of the new policy. Changes that affect nearly one million children in our state and more than 40 percent of our state budget are extremely complex and will take time to implement. The committee will recommend a plan to phase-in changes to the Basic Education program and funding formulas/allocations so that any increased requirement in program or instruction comes with increased funding to pay for it.

New Funding Formulas to Support New Definition of Basic Education

The proposal includes a new way of calculating how much funding the state provides school districts. The formulas take into consideration factors such as class size, the need for other staff such as teacher-librarians and student nurses, maintenance and operating costs, and central administration. *Additional funding is also provided for other important programs such as the Learning Assistance Program, Bilingual Program, and Special Education.*

Supporting Continuous Improvement in our Education System

School improvements don't happen without adequate resources, and adequate resources should lead to school improvements.

In addition to the state board's work, workgroups will address a variety of topics, including but not limited to:

- Phase-in and implementation of the new system
- Funding formula details
- Local funding (levy issues)
- Support for effective teaching and teacher compensation
- Early learning
- Closing the achievement gap
- Data

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